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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: ITALY REQUESTS CLOSER CONSULTATIONS

REF: STATE 131526

Classified By: Labor Counselor Candace Putnam, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

11. (C) Summary. Although we may differ on what should be addressed first--nation-building or local assistance that supports peaceful development of a national government--Italy supports U.S. goals for Somalia. In Italy's view the greatest threat Somalia faces is not renewed fighting by warlords but the growing and pernicious influence of Islamic fundamentalists. MFA DG for Sub-Saharan Africa Dejak insisted that Italian Senator Raffaelli consults fully with SRSG Fall, and that the district-level reconciliation process Italy is funding was blessed by both Fall and UNDP. Dejak suggested closer Washington-Rome-Nairobi contacts to eliminate "confusion" over Italian objectives. Please see an action request in para 10.

12. (C) Labor counselor and poloff delivered reftel points to Stefano Dejak, Director General for Sub-Saharan Africa, and Giancarlo Izzo, former Italian Ambassador to Accra who will replace Dejak next week. Dejak is moving on to Nairobi to join the Special Italian Delegation for Somalia.

13. (C) Dejak opened the meeting by expressing appreciation at what he described as the new (since March) level of U.S. engagement in Somali affairs. Throughout the meeting, he stressed that Rome and Washington were in agreement on the broad goals of reconciliation, the peaceful establishment of a functioning central government in Somalia, and the importance of coordinating activities through the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). He regretted that rumor and innuendo had perhaps confused Washington about Rome's commitment to those goals and suggested that the best way to eliminate this confusion was more communication. He regretted that the proposed DVC with Brussels and other interested states had to be canceled for technical reasons.

14. (C) In Dejak's view, the greatest danger Somalia faced today was not the prospect of renewed fighting by warlords. Rather the danger stems from (a) the inability of the international community to deliver tangible and timely progress on reconciliation that would forestall intervention by front-line states, and (b) the pernicious and growing influence of Islamic fundamentalists on Somali society.

15. (C) According to Dejak, if the peace process fails and the international community does not deliver on its promises, Somalia will again descend into war. Ethiopia agreed to restrain itself, but only as long as Addis is convinced the international community is making progress. After their defeat in 1997, Dejak maintained, the Islamic fundamentalists changed tactics and adopted a new Turabi-inspired plan to permeate Somali society through the education, health and water services networks. Since 40 percent of the population is under age 14, this presents a real and future danger, one that should be addressed through extensive civil society programs.

16. (C) Dejak insisted that the MFA, and Italian Special Representative Senator Mario Raffaelli, every day urge Somalia President Yusef to cease unhelpful warlike rhetoric and noted that Raffaelli had gone to Addis earlier in the year to tell the Foreign Minister that Ethiopian troops must stay out of Somalia. However, Dejak disputed our suggestion that Yusef's rhetoric would lead to renewed attacks by the warlords. He said that the warlords had already established a pattern of dialogue; on March 17, the parties agreed that frontline states could help train Somali forces but that no foreign troops would be sent to Somalia, either under their own or an AU/IGAD flag. Dejak maintained that the warlords are united in saying that there be no/no AU/IGAD operation in Somalia and that Mogadishu remain the capital and the seat of the federal institutions.

17. (C) On the issue of Senator Raffaelli, Dejak insisted that Raffaelli fully supported SRSG Fall and closely consulted with him on a regular basis, including on Raffaelli's trip to Mogadishu. Dejak regretted the "confusion" about this trip but pledged full and continuing cooperation with Ambassador Fall.

18. (C) On the issue of Italian funding for district-level reconciliation, Dejak was mildly annoyed at the suggestion

that it was an "Italian" project. Italy, he said, is trying to enhance dialogue among Somalis and does not want this funding to be perceived as "divisive." He maintained that

Italy was trying to foster local administration in the districts that are ready to do so, where there is no conflict or controversy. Dejak said he understood there was concern in Washington about extending this project to the two regions of Somaliland but repeated Italy did not want to create division. He noted that Italy's effort is aimed to show with this action that the international community goes beyond mere words. Dejak claims that the Coordination and Monitoring Committee (CMC) approved the project and that it is part of a UNDP effort. In addition, according to Dejak, SRSG Fall was aware of it from its inception.

19. (C) With out prompting, Dejak took on the issue of the CMC and its effectiveness. In Dejak's view the CMC is broken and has not met since April with Somalis. Italy has asked SRSG Fall to convene a "real" CMC as soon as possible. Dejak noted that Italy was part of the EU-Somalia Core Group that met regularly well before SRSG Fall's arrival. Italy has suggested the idea of reconstituting this group and, according to Dejak, SRSG Fall is amenable.

10. (C) Ambassador Izzo suggested that what we faced was a difference in focus. The U.S. was more interested in first tackling nation-building, while Italy saw an urgent need to first provide funds on the ground to foster local institutions that would support a national government. Perhaps, he suggested, there was a way to meld our two approaches. Dejak encouraged more specific communication on Somalia. Italy maintains regular contact with the UK, Sweden, and the EU Commission on the Somali peace process, and the Italians would like to establish a similar link with the U.S. He proposed first a DVC among Washington, Rome, and Nairobi (he suggested that Raffaelli might be invited to a DVC through the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi). Action Request: Please advise if Washington would like to organize such a DVC.

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